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THE ISSUE—ITS HISTORY.

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SPEECH

OF

HON. JOSHUA R. GIDDINGS, OF OHIO.

Delivered in the House of Representatives, January 12, 1859.

Mr. GIDDINGS said: Mr. Chairman, two days since, my friend from Maine [Mr. WASHBURN] took occasion to call attention to the great issue which now divides the people of these States. I listened to him with unusual pleasure. I fully accorded with his views. It is certain that one of our political organizations holds that a State or a Territory, when forming a State Constitution, and acting within our Federal powers, may authorize its people to enslave a portion of mankind, doom them to live without knowledge, to grope their way to physical death, amid the darkness of moral and intellectual night! The other party emphatically denies those doctrines, declaring that human Governments are limited in their just powers by the law of eternal right and wrong, and can impart to no man authority or moral right to rob, enslave, or murder his fellow-beings; that the object and duty of Governments are to protect every human soul in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and happiness.

These positions are antagonistic. The gulf that separates the Republican and Democratic parties is broad and deep; one reasoning and acting for Freedom, the other for Slavery, it becomes impossible for them to agree on any collateral question.

The President, in his message, has spoken for his party. In the first paragraph, he recognises the dogma that human souls may be enslaved and transformed into *property*; and the entire message constitutes an argument for extending the curse of human bondage. If his predicate be correct, his efforts to acquire Cuba, and parts of Mexico, and Central America, cannot be wrong. Indeed, his labors in behalf of the foreign and domestic slave trade are based upon the doctrines of his party; and those men

who are now engaged in bringing African slaves into Georgia and other Southern States must stand or fall with the party whose doctrines they support; for if Slavery be right, the slave trade cannot be wrong.

I have often spoken on this subject, and do not intend to enlarge upon it at this time. I have defined the issue thus briefly for the purpose of calling attention to some incidents in that train of events which developed this issue with the same moral certainty with which effect always follows cause.

I am led to the discharge of this duty from the consideration that I have long participated in those incidents, and have been somewhat familiar with some of the measures which have conduced to the bringing of this great question before the country. I am also induced to do this from the consideration that many honest men are desirous that Republicans shall modify, change, or abandon their doctrines.

It is certain that our principles were promulgated in the Declaration of Independence; that the signers of that first charter of American liberty declared that all men are endowed by their Creator with the unalienable, the abstract right to enjoy life, liberty, and happiness; and that the framers of the Constitution, recognising this primal doctrine, ordained "that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Our doctrine seems to have met with universal approval, except by the Tories of that day, up to the year 1791; and the first denial of it by any Whig was published by Thomas Paine, in his essay upon "the Rights of Man," wherein he declares that "whatever a whole nation chooses to do, it has a right to do." No person can fail to see the identity of this doctrine with that

now proclaimed by the Democratic party, alleging that the people of a Territory, in framing a Constitution, may without injustice authorize Slavery if they choose. The doctrines of Paine and of the Democratic party are identical in denying that human Governments are limited by the law of eternal right and wrong. They agree that the people of a nation or State may, if they choose, authorize murder, robbery, and piracy: for all these are embraced in the term "Slavery."

But the doctrine of Paine would probably have passed unnoticed by the statesmen of that age, except for a tacit approval by Mr. Jefferson, who carelessly expressed a desire that the work might be reprinted. The approval, however, referred to the work as a whole, and not to this particular dogma. But this circumstance called out John Quincy Adams, at that time a young lawyer of Boston, who, in a series of well-considered articles, exposed the error of Paine, and clearly demonstrated the limited power of human Governments—showed their inability to change the natural or innate character of any act; that murder, or piracy, or robbery, is inherently wicked and criminal, rendered so by the Creator, by the immutable law of right and wrong, and must retain their inherent wickedness, though ten thousand human statutes pronounce them just, and authorize their commission; that the legitimate powers of government are limited to the protection, and do not extend to the destruction, of man's inalienable rights. This vindication of the self-evident truths promulgated in the Declaration of Independence, and repeated in the Constitution, was published while most of the signers of that great charter of Liberty and most of the framers of the Constitution were living. It emanated from the son of one of the most distinguished of those patriots. It attracted the attention of General Washington, then President of the United States, who soon after tendered to young Adams a foreign mission. Every person will see the perfect identity of the views proclaimed by Mr. Adams and those avowed by the Republican party.

The institution of Slavery was then acknowledged to be wrong. In the language of Henry Clay, it was "looked upon as a curse—a curse to the slave, and a grievous curse to the master," a crime which they were constrained to tolerate, but could not justify.

The people of the free States regarded it as a relic of the more barbarous ages, unsuited to Christian civilization, and they repudiated and abolished it.

But the Southern States suffered it to remain undisturbed until it became chronic, and men began to look round for arguments in favor of its continuance. Those of more desperate character began to deal in slaves, making merchandise in human flesh their regular vocation. Planters began to look upon these crimes as common, became familiar with them, and event-

ually justified their perpetration by what they termed the necessity of surrounding circumstances. Of course, they viewed Northern men, who advocated universal freedom and justice to all, with distrust, and soon after with determined opposition. This feeling became so strong as to defeat the election of Mr. Adams to the Presidency in 1828, although his previous Administration had been able, pure, and patriotic.

It was the good fortune of that renowned statesman to have lived at the time when the Declaration of Independence was promulgated. He had mingled freely with the patriots who devoted their lives to the support of its "self-evident truths;" he had drank deeply at the fountains of Liberty; he had fully imbibed the spirit of that heroic age. Soon after his defeat in the Presidential campaign, he became a member of this body; and while here he adhered most strictly to the doctrines of the Revolution, and strove to develop the real issue which then existed between slave and free labor. While the Slave Power was constantly persecuting him, endeavoring to prostrate his influence, he was laboring to bring out to the public view the secret doctrines and motives which controlled its advocates. If gentlemen will consult the debates of this body during the time he served here, or his biography, they will find that he was constantly endeavoring to develop the precise issue now existing between the Republican and Democratic parties. I may be permitted to cite an instance. In 1844, the Legislature of Massachusetts sent to this House a memorial, asking an amendment of the Constitution, so as to apportion the representation in Congress according to the free population of the several States. It was referred to a select committee of nine members, some of whom were regarded as among the ablest statesmen of the South. As chairman, Mr. Adams drew up a report. It was based upon the self-evident truths, that all men have equal right to live, to that liberty which is necessary to acquire knowledge and attain happiness. It was read to the committee, and considered maturely. Of the eight members besides himself, I alone signed this report; but no one denied its doctrines. He and I had hoped that Governor Gilmer, of Virginia, and other Southern members, would have had the moral courage to admit or deny its principles; but they evidently feared to do so.

I will give another instance, illustrating his confidence in the truths of that instrument. When Southern men had long been in the habit of threatening a dissolution of the Union, some people of Massachusetts became tired of the bombast, and sent a petition to this body, praying Congress to take measures for the peaceful and immediate separation of the States composing our Confederacy. Its presentation by Mr. Adams created great sensation in this body; and a resolution of censure was immediately offered; and the aged patriot was forthwith arraigned at the bar of the House. The

enemies of Freedom were loud in their exultation; they fully expected to prostrate his influence. A distinguished and eloquent son of Kentucky was appointed to manage the prosecution. Some of Mr. Adams's friends faltered; others became alarmed, and made indecent haste to deny all sympathy with him, and publicly to repudiate his doctrines; but these things did not move him. A deep and absorbing interest pervaded this body and the community generally. Every member was in his seat. The spacious galleries were crowded to their utmost capacity. Against him were arrayed Gilmer and Wise and Cooper and Johnson, and a host of distinguished men from the slave States. Marshall led the assault in an able and effective speech, showing, to the apparent satisfaction of all Southern members, that Mr. Adams had been guilty of treason to the people and to the Government of these States, by presenting the petition.

As Marshall closed, the distinguished statesman rose from his seat. His movements were deliberate, and his whole bearing was dignified. His form was erect under the weight of nearly four-score years. There he stood, venerable for his age, for his great learning, for his important services, for the high honors bestowed on him. He entered upon no argument. He put forth none of that terrible invective which had so often caused his enemies to tremble and turn pale. He merely called for the reading of the "first paragraph in the Declaration of Independence," and the Clerk read that portion which sets forth the natural rights of "all men to life, liberty, and happiness." And with unusual emphasis he read that part which declares "Governments to be constituted among men to secure the enjoyment of these rights;" and when he had read the sentence which declares that, "whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right and the duty of the people to modify or abolish it," Mr. Adams stopped him, and in a loud, distinct, and solemn voice, repeated the last member of the sentence; then turning to the Speaker, he declared, "if there be any principle dear to the American heart, it is the right of the people to modify or abolish their Government whenever it becomes destructive of the liberties or happiness of any portion of its inhabitants." And having avowed these doctrines as the basis of his vindication, he boldly challenged them to the issue. Every person present felt the strength of his position. His stalwart foes were suddenly prostrated. His persecutors were confounded. Not one of their number could be persuaded to admit or deny those great truths.

It is also due to the truth of history to say that other members sympathized with Mr. Adams, and assisted him in these efforts, in a greater or less degree, according to the interest which they felt in the subject. Among those most active were Hon. William Slade of Vermont, Hon. Seth M. Gates of New York, and

at a later period, Hons. John P. Hale and, Amos Tuck of New Hampshire, and John G. Palfrey of Massachusetts. Indeed, I shall not soon forget the expression of the aged patriot, when his learned colleague (Mr. Palfrey) closed his first able speech in favor of human rights. The countenance of the "old man eloquent" seemed radiant with hope as he exclaimed, "thank God the seal is broken; the seal is broken; Massachusetts is no longer silent." The lovers of Liberty in this body saw at that period, most clearly, that men holding the doctrine of the Republican fathers would never seek to wield the power of Congress, or of the Federal Government, to enslave mankind, or to deprive them of those rights with which the God of nature had endowed them. They well understood that the real issue was based upon primal truths, although Southern men would not—nay, dared not—acknowledge it. Mr. Adams labored through life to bring out the real facts to the public view. It was his ruling principle, which exhibited itself *strong in death*. I visited him while prostrate upon what was then supposed his death-bed. In the silent chamber, I sat beside the dying patriot. His lamp of life seemed flickering in its socket. His voice was feeble, but his words were earnest. I told him that his physician feared to have him converse upon any subject likely to excite emotion. Looking me full in the face, said he, "I am on the verge of eternity; I shall never meet you again in this world; I must talk;" and he proceeded to say that he had no hope for the perpetuity of our Government, or for the liberty of our people, except that which was based upon its return to the doctrines on which it had been originally founded; and he exhorted me to exert whatever influence I could for the attainment of that object. He subsequently lingered awhile between this and the spirit world, until the kind angel whispered his release to a higher sphere.

Mr. Chairman, I am at times led, in my own mind, to compare the anxiety of the dying Adams to form the present issue, with that of some living politicians to abandon it. He, however, had the benefit of great experience. He saw and knew that the slave power wielded the Government; that the interests of the institution guided the legislation of Congress and controlled the Executive action; it made and unmade our United States Bank; it fostered our domestic manufactures, and then made war upon our manufacturing interests; it dictated a protective tariff, and then repudiated the policy; it encouraged, then abandoned, the iron interest, just as the prosperity of slave labor seemed to require. And when from this forum members endeavored to give information to the people, their lips were sealed by gag rules; the freedom of debate was stricken down, and the right of petition denied, that Slavery might be encouraged. Every measure and policy of Government was made to bend to the interest of

that institution. These things were clearly seen by Mr. Adams and his contemporaries, and their efforts to bring out those important facts to the understanding of the people were constant and unyielding. To me it was then incomprehensible how any man could expect that Government would do justice to the laborers of our free States, while its whole patronage and influence were exerted in favor of the most ardent despotism towards the laborers of the South. Some Southern members were more consistent. They boldly asserted that labor must everywhere be compulsory; that both North and South the capitalists owned the laborers; that the influence and powers of the Government should therefore be exerted for the protection of capitalists, and leave them to take care of the laborers; and they wielded its powers for that object. I was then, as now, incapable of comprehending how an issue, in regard to tariff, or upon any other collateral question, could effect a radical reform in our Government. The necessity for basing our political efforts upon the essential truths avowed by our Republican fathers, was to me most obvious.

I had assisted in trying the experiment of uniting men of conflicting principles for the purpose of carrying the election in 1840, and driving the Democratic party from power. I labored earnestly for the election of Harrison and Tyler, believing that if we succeeded, we should, among other reforms, regain the freedom of debate in this body. After the result was known, and while the President-elect was on his way to this city, I made an effort to speak on the subject of Slavery. I was met at every step by slaveholders and by gag rules, but I succeeded. My friends regarded my effort as successful—as an achievement. But the President, whom I had assisted to elect, expressed his abhorrence of all attempts to agitate the question of human rights; and when, after his arrival, I called at his quarters to pay him the customary respect, he gave me such unequivocal evidence of his indignation, that I was constrained to surrender my own self-respect, or to withhold all further manifestations of respect for him. While he lived, his influence was exerted in favor of the gag rules—in favor of Slavery; and the next year I was publicly censured and driven from my seat in this body, for avowing doctrines which no slaveholder dared deny; but they united with Northern serviles to censure me for uttering truths on which no man of reputation presumed to take issue. This occurred under a Whig Administration, for whose election I had labored most earnestly; and by a House, a large majority of whose members belonged to the party with whom I had always acted. These facts illustrate the fallacy of uniting conflicting elements merely to carry an election. They show that when the Executive thus elected assumes any definite policy, the party at once dissolves into its original elements, and the various fac-

tions turn their weapons against each other. The disbandment of the Whig party in 1841 left no remaining doubt on the minds of thinking men, that, a political party, to become permanent, must base its organization upon immutable truth; and the failure of President Tyler to carry out the views of the party who elected him constituted an important step towards the development of our present issues.

Mr. Clay, the Whig candidate in 1844, was committed to our doctrines; but by surrendering his opposition to the annexation of Texas, he lost the support of a portion of the Northern vote, and was therefore defeated. His failure constituted another lesson to politicians, against the policy of uniting political opponents for the mere purpose of carrying an election.

The annexation of Texas, with the avowed purpose of extending and eternizing Slavery, constitutes an important chapter in the progress of events, showing that the Democratic party then acted upon the doctrines now avowed, but evaded every effort to compel them to show their colors.

In 1848, the two great parties, in their National Conventions and in their platforms, carefully avoided any issue upon the subject of Slavery. But such was the popular feeling, that a new party was formed; and although it did not adopt the rights of mankind, enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, as the basis of its organization, it founded its claims to support upon its devotion to Freedom. Its numbers were respectable, and so many votes were drawn from the Democratic party, that the Whigs elected their candidate. But the new Administration, upon its entrance into office, was beset with the same difficulties which surrounded that of General Harrison, in 1841. General Taylor could find no definite doctrine nor policy on which he had been elected, or to which he had been committed. Of course, the conflicting elements were unable to unite; they separated, and the party disbanded, and the necessity for selecting immutable truth as the basis for a political organization became still more apparent.

At the assembling of the Thirty-first Congress, some eight members separated from the old parties, avowing their determination to vote for no man to the office of Speaker, who hesitated to pledge himself so to arrange the committees as to secure respectful reports upon Northern petitions in regard to Slavery. Both of the leading organizations saw that this would at once develop the great issue which they feared, and they rejected the proposition. Under those circumstances, no candidate could command a majority of the votes, and after a contest of three weeks they united in a resolution, declaring that the member receiving the highest number of votes should be elected. The Democratic candidate was thus elected, and the Whig party actually died by its efforts to prevent the development of that influence which

defeated all its measures. From that day, it appears only in history. But it were in vain for historians to record conspiring events, if statesmen, politicians, and people, close their eyes to the obvious teachings of these examples, and strive to maintain a political party composed of discordant elements, with no common principle on which all can unite.

The advocates of liberty had greatly increased in 1852. Their National Convention was characterized for its dignity, and the high moral and political character of its members. Its platform of principles was more elevated and statesmanlike than had been previously put forth by any political party. But as neither of the old organizations openly denied the truths of our Declaration of Independence, the friends of Freedom forbore to reiterate them, as such reiteration would constitute no issue with either of the other parties.

They had denounced all agitation upon the subject of Slavery; indeed, they avoided making any issue between themselves. Neither denied any doctrine or policy which the other asserted; and this timidity determined many of their members to take a more distinct position whenever an opportunity should be presented. The people generally felt it unbecoming intelligent men, unworthy of the descendants of our revolutionary sires, to fear the investigation or the public discussion of human rights.

Fortunately, at that time the people who had settled in Kansas were calling for a Territorial Government. That region had been solemnly consecrated to Freedom; and the right of its inhabitants to life, liberty, and property, was to be again recognised or denied by Congress. It appeared inevitable that members of this body must be driven from their hiding places. I had for some years looked to that period with hope and expectation that it would bring out the issue between Liberty and Slavery. But the chairman of the Senate's Committee on Territories, feeling the difficulty of his position, and desirous of retaining the confidence of his constituents, and at the same time to avoid a conflict with the slave power, determined to adhere to the old expediency of evasion; yet he appeared undecided and vacillating. He reported his bill to organize the Territory, then moved its recommitment, changed it, and re-reported it; and finally resolved on denying the right of Congress to enforce within our Territories that provision of the Constitution which declares that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law;" and to assert, in opposition to this distinct declaration, that the people of a Territory may, if they choose, deprive a portion of the human family of life, liberty, and property—may rob them of their intelligence, their manhood.

This doctrine being so modified as to limit the power of *excluding* Slavery to the Convention which might frame their State Constitution,

became for the time being the avowed doctrine of their party leaders; and, after the lapse of more than sixty years, the dogma put forth by Mr. Paine in 1791 was avowed in the Senate, in this House, and by individuals of the party throughout the nation. The advocates of this atheism attempted to sanctify it by calling it "popular sovereignty," and argued that a people, when forming a Government, may authorize piracy and murder and robbery, if they choose to do so; that the right to enslave our fellow men constitutes one of the very elements of "self-government."

This avowal of unlimited tyranny, without reference to the Constitution, or to that eternal law of right and wrong which was ordained by nature's God, so aroused the people at the elections in 1854, that the Democrats were left in a minority in this body.

But the opposition was composed of conflicting elements; some were slaveholders, some Americans, but most of them were Republicans. These factions could not unite in the election of Speaker, or on any subject touching Slavery. The Republicans adopted resolutions pledging their support to any member who would so arrange the committees as to secure respectful reports on Northern petitions in regard to Slavery, precisely as the advocates of Freedom had done in 1849. The Democratic party and fourteen Americans discarded this reasonable proposition; but those two parties could not agree with each other, and a contest unequalled in our political history followed. For nine weeks the conflict raged, until a distinguished Republican from Massachusetts was made Speaker; and it would appear that the whole nation must have seen the necessity for bringing the radical question of human rights before the people for decision. The Democratic party, in 1856, when assembled in General Convention, officially avowed the doctrine proclaimed by their leaders in 1854. Thus, by the force of circumstances, was that party driven, step by step, after more than twenty years' resistance, to take a definite position in regard to the greatest question which ever agitated the Christian world. These circumstances had been created by Adams and Slade and Gates and Palfrey and Hale and King and Allen and Wilmot and Root and Durkee and Julian, and other members of Congress, and by societies and lecturers and editors who had labored among the people, to drive the advocates of oppression to an avowal of their doctrines.

To effect this object, I had toiled for many years. I had, in this body, asserted the doctrine of man's inalienable rights, and called on gentlemen of the Democratic party to admit or deny it; but I had called in vain. I had travelled and spoken in thirteen States; I had written essays and newspaper articles; I had compiled a volume of what I regarded as interesting incidents, showing the secret workings of the slave power. These had been gathered with

great labor from more than two hundred documents reposing in our library under the accumulated dust of many years. To expose this moral and political infidelity, I had encountered Southern opposition and Northern distrust; and I greatly rejoiced to see that party compelled to avow its doctrines; for I well knew that the avowal of its principles would show that its days were numbered.

When the Republicans met in National Convention, in June, 1856, but one alternative lay before them; they were constrained to take position upon the undying truths promulgated in the Declaration of Independence, and perpetuated in the Federal Constitution, or to discard those doctrines, repudiate the Constitution, and unite with the Democratic party. The platform of the Republican party was a necessity, rendered imperious by circumstances. So obvious was this necessity, that in the committee appointed to draw up a confession of political faith, not a member seemed to entertain a doubt upon the subject. I was myself one of the committee, and speak from actual knowledge. The entire platform, as it now stands,* was adopted in committee by a unanimous vote, and reported to the Convention, which adopted it without a dissenting voice.

The issue thus formed was afterwards con-

firmed by the Supreme Court, acting as the agent of the slave power. That tribunal, not able to contradict or evade the language of the Declaration of Independence, insulted the intelligence and common sense of the people by gravely deciding that the signers of that instrument *said that which they did not mean, and intended that which they did not say*. But that decision transferred the issue to the record. It has passed into history, and will remain subject to the inspection of future generations. Our party was founded on these doctrines. By the inherent force of these principles it has increased beyond all precedent. The Republican States now include two-thirds of our free population. This platform was framed and adopted by a Convention authorized by the people, and must remain until another Convention of like powers shall assemble. Men who deny these doctrines may vote with us, preferring our organization to that of the Democratic party. We should treat them kindly, encourage them in every proper manner; but we cannot claim them as Republicans, while they deny our essential doctrines. Men who believe in and adhere to our principles, do not propose any modification; and those who do not believe them surely have no right to demand a surrender of them.

It is undoubtedly true, that some who desire

* The following is a copy of the Republican platform adopted at Philadelphia, June 18, 1856:

"This convention of delegates assembled in pursuance of a call addressed to the people of the United States, without regard to past political differences or divisions, who are opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; to the policy of the present Administration; to the extension of slavery into free territory; in favor of the admission of Kansas as a free State; of restoring the action of the Federal Government to the principles of Washington and Jefferson; and for the purpose of presenting candidates for the offices of President and Vice-President, do resolve:

"1. *Resolved*, That the maintenance of the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence, and embodied in the Federal Constitution, are essential to the preservation of our republic in interests, and that the rights of the States must and shall be preserved.

"2. *Resolved*, That, with our republican fathers, we hold it to be a self-evident truth, that all men are endowed with the inalienable right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that the primary object and ulterior design of our Federal Government were to secure these rights to all persons under its exclusive jurisdiction; and that, as our republican fathers, when they had abolished slavery in all our national territory, ordained that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, it becomes our duty to maintain this provision of their Constitution, against all attempts to violate it for the purpose of establishing slavery in the Territories of the United States, by positive legislation prohibiting its existence or extension thereon. That we deny the authority of Congress, of a Territorial Legislature, of any individual, or association of individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any Territory of the United States, while the present Constitution shall be maintained.

"3. *Resolved*, That the Constitution confers upon Congress sovereign power over the Territories of the United States, for their Government, and that in the exercise of this power it is both the right and the duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism, Polygamy and Slavery.

"4. *Resolved*, That, while the Constitution of the United States was ordained and established by the people in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, and secure the blessings of liberty, and contains ample provisions for the protection of the life, liberty, and property, of every citizen, the dearest constitutional rights of the people of Kansas have been fraudulently and violently taken from them, their

Territory has been invaded by an armed force; spurious and pretended legislative, judicial, and executive officers have been set over them, by whose usurped authority, sustained by the military power of the Government, tyrannical and unconstitutional laws have been enacted and enforced; the rights of the people to keep and bear arms have been infringed; test oaths of an extraordinary and entangling nature have been imposed, as a condition of exercising the right of suffrage and holding office; the right of an accused person to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury has been denied; the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, has been violated; they have been deprived of life, liberty, and property, without due process of law; that the freedom of speech and of the press has been abridged; the right to choose their representatives has been made of no effect; murders, robberies, and arson, have been instigated and encouraged, and the offenders have been allowed to go unpunished; that all these things have been done with the knowledge, sanction, and procurement, of the present Administration; and that for this high crime against the Constitution, the Union, and Humanity, we arraign the Administration, the President, his advisers, agents, supporters, apologists, and accessories, either before or after the facts, before the country, and before the world; and that it is our fixed purpose to bring the actual perpetrators of these atrocious outrages, and their accessories, to a sure and condign punishment hereafter." * * *

"7. *Resolved*, That a railroad to the Pacific ocean, by the most central and practical route, is imperatively demanded by the interests of the whole country, and that the Federal Government ought to render immediate and efficient aid in its construction, and, as an auxiliary thereto, the immediate construction of an emigrant route on the line of the railroad.

"8. *Resolved*, That appropriations by Congress for the improvement of rivers and harbors, of a national character, required for the accommodation and security of our existing commerce, are authorized by the Constitution, and justified by the obligation of Government to protect the lives and property of its citizens.

"9. *Resolved*, That we invite the affiliation and co-operation of the men of all parties, however differing from us in other respects, in support of the principles herein declared; and, believing that the spirit of our institutions, as well as the Constitution of our country, guarantees liberty of conscience and equality of rights among citizens, we oppose all legislation impairing their security."

to defeat the Democratic party desire to modify the Republican platform; and it is equally certain that no man who desires the success of our *doctrines* will advise us to abandon their support. It must be obvious that every effort to change our position tends to our defeat, though it may not be so designed. Our troops are in the field; our enemy is before us; our ranks are serried, and ready for the conflict; and he must be a secret enemy or a doubtful friend who would advise us to change position in the face of the enemy, who is ready to charge so soon as he sees us begin to waver.

Of the character of the issue thus formed, I may be permitted to remark, that no other ever has, and I think no other ever will, take so deep a hold upon the American mind as that which relates to the natural, the inalienable rights of mankind. These constitute the basis of the Republican platform now, as they did in 1776. The devotion of the American people to Liberty then proved invincible upon those battle-fields where they met the enemies of Freedom at the cannon's mouth; and it will not prove less efficient at this day, when the conflict is at the ballot-box. We are not only stimulated by our love of liberty, by all the sacred recollections which cluster around our Revolution, but we have sworn that "no person" under our jurisdiction "shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Allegiance to the Constitution, to human nature, and to God, constrain us to maintain our republican doctrines.

I speak of the fundamental truths which constitute the basis of our political faith, as they constituted the basis of the Declaration of Independence. These truths are immutable and unchangeable as their Divine Author. They must forever remain the basis of our action, while the Constitution shall be maintained, or the party shall exist. On matters of policy, our platform may be changed to suit occasions as they arise; but the great central truth on which we all unite must remain unchanged. The constitutional powers of Government must at all times be wielded to secure every human soul under its exclusive jurisdiction in the enjoyment of the rights which God has bestowed on him.

To this doctrine there can be no modification. There is no neutral ground between *right* and *wrong*, between *Liberty* and *Slavery*. Every human being is entitled to live, to that liberty which is necessary to unfold his moral nature, and prepare for heaven. And he that is not with us on this point, must be against us. And when politicians suggest that the Republican party shall abandon this primal truth, I reply, there is a million of electors in these States who will not abandon this doctrine of the Constitution, this faith of our republican fathers. Men who have labored ten, fifteen, or twenty years, to bring out this great principle, will not suddenly abandon it, face to the right

about, and again submit to the domination of the slave power. They will not be deceived, nor defrauded of their votes. They will sustain no man for the office of President or Vice President, because they do not know whether he is *right* or *wrong*; but candidates, to obtain support, must show by their past action or present pledges that they stand unconditionally upon these primal doctrines.

I am aware that our opponents charge the Republican party with abandoning their platform, because members of this body voted at our last session for the amendment to the Leecompton Constitution, in order to defeat that infamous measure. Even the President, in his message, repeats this charge. For the benefit of that high functionary, and others, I will say that members of Congress did not make the Republican platform, and they cannot *unmake* it. The people who framed it will see to its preservation. True, the President has cause to complain. We left our fortress, and, by strategy in the open field, we captured his Leecompton host; but it is not usual for prisoners thus to complain of the superior science of their captors.

It has been objected, that a political party cannot stand upon moral and religious truth. I reply, it cannot at this day stand *without* such basis. The progress of Christian civilization has demonstrated that the popular mind can be no longer satisfied with mere questions of policy, while the Government is made to sanction the most arant despotism, and encourage crimes of the most flagrant character.

We do not say the black man is, or shall be, the equal of the white man; or that he shall vote or hold office, however just such position may be; but we assert that he who murders a black man shall be hanged; that he who robs a black man of his liberty or his property shall be punished like other criminals. We deny that crime depends upon the complexion of him against whom it is committed.

Sir, our Government should have led the nations of the earth in this glorious work; but it is now too late for us to aspire to that proud position. The Emperor of Russia is at this time engaged in freeing the slaves of his Empire, while our President is seeking the extension of human bondage. England long since repudiated African slavery. France imitated the noble example. Several Mohammedan Princes have shown themselves better Christians than American statesmen, by abolishing slavery and the slave trade in their dominions. Even phlegmatic Holland is in advance of us in the great cause of emancipation.

But it now appears to be generally expected, both North and South, East and West, by statesmen and people, that the Republican party will come into power at the next Presidential election; nothing can prevent this but their own divisions; and it is proper that we should forewarn the people of Cuba, and of Mexico, and

of Central America, that if, by any means, they come under the jurisdiction of our Constitution, *its provisions will be enforced*; and that "no person among them shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Having sworn allegiance to the doctrines of the fathers, we are expected to carry them out in good faith.

Mr. Chairman, from childhood I have mingled with the people. I know their love of justice, their devotion to liberty. The great American heart beats in sympathy for the oppressed, for justice to ourselves and to mankind. The popular voice demands the exercise of our constitutional powers, to drive oppression from our Territories, from our ships while sailing upon the high seas, from this District; to exclude it from all support by Congress, by the Executive, by our courts; to condemn it as an outlaw; and that the legitimate powers of Government shall be exerted for Freedom. Give the people an opportunity, and they will elect a President and Vice President, a Senate and House of Representatives, pledged not merely to these purposes, but to put forth the moral influence of our nation to drive oppression from the earth.

To the attainment of this object my official labors have long been directed. Those labors are now drawing to a close; and I shall soon surrender the cause, so far as I am officially

concerned, to other and abler hands. My political pathway has been rugged—beset with difficulties. I have been constrained to meet many of my fellow-members on the field of intellectual conflict, and at times those conflicts have been severe; but I am not conscious of having assailed any man except in self-defence, and I separate from my opponents without a feeling of unkindness; indeed, if my desire, my earnest prayer, could avail, they should all be just and wise, and pure and happy. Here, for many long years, I have counselled with friends and combatted opponents. The scenes through which I have passed rush upon the recollection, as I am about to bid adieu to this arena of my political life. I shall leave it with emotions, but not with regret. I shall bear with me to private life many interesting recollections of the great contest which gives character to the age in which we live. And I beg to assure you, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, that whether in public or in private life, in prosperity or adversity, whether living or dying, my heart's desire and prayer to God shall be, that every human soul may enjoy that liberty which is necessary to protect and cherish life, attain knowledge, and prepare for heaven; and, when I shall have passed away, let my epitaph announce that *I hated oppression and wrong*—that I LOVED LIBERTY AND JUSTICE.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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